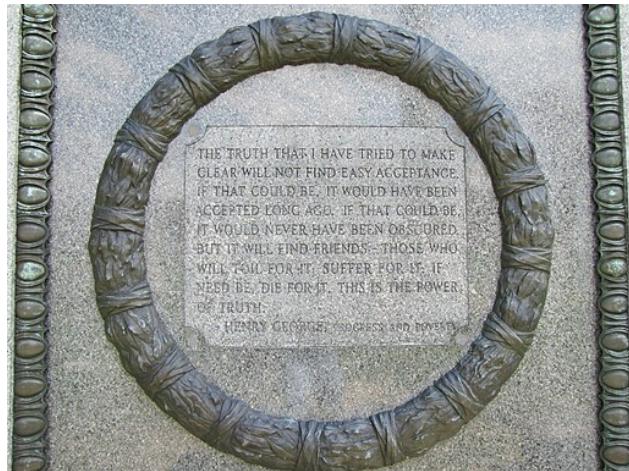


# WHY I DON'T WANT BAD TAKES TO GO TO WASTE

DECEMBER 5, 2024 | JOEL SCHLOSBERG | 0 COMMENTS



Henry George's epitaph marks the case he provided for disentangling economic exchange from political privilege, an insight he knew "will not find easy acceptance." Photo by Mattercore. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

"Bad opinion pieces in papers of record" are getting a bad rap from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

The congresswoman [took to Bluesky](#) on December 2 to suggest discussing "thinkers we find valuable" and avoiding "linking to bad columns" so that "incentives change" for news outlets chasing attention (and, presumably, ad revenue).

Such voluntary mindfulness avoids the appeal to force in Ocasio-Cortez's previous [intimation](#) that "one billionaire ... shouldn't be allowed to own so much of the internet." (Would a flourishing Bluesky be satisfied with a valuation of \$999,999,999?) The Dr. Evil a couple years back was not Twitter purchaser Elon Musk but Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, whose holdings included the Instagram where Ocasio-Cortez posted.

Still, that's halfway to Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan's maxim that "the cure for a fallacious argument is a better argument, not the suppression of ideas." The "better argument" of the other half may well come from a cold, hard look at the "fallacious argument." Sagan and Druyan note John Stuart Mill's contention that truth arises from "collision with error," elaborating that "if we know only our own side of the argument, we hardly know even that; it becomes stale, soon learned only by rote, untested, a pallid and lifeless truth."

Such pallor might blanch Bluesky's atmosphere if it drowns out a no-longer-silent majority. Ocasio-Cortez's November [takeaway](#) on the site: "[A]n echo chamber just won a presidential election."

That interpretation is unconvincing when Trump's constituency compounded consistently nationwide, amid the ruins of early-2000s interventionist expansionism and a level of economic elitism that made a landlord playing a boss on TV seem like an upstart.

In particular, support for George W. Bush's war in Iraq was bolstered by Thomas L. Friedman downplaying warning signs in *New York Times* rather than *New York Post* columns. Friedman wanted to "take a very big stick" to pop a "terrorism bubble;" Ben Burgis [reminds](#) us that outside of Friedman's own bubble, "what the bubble-bursting meant in practice was that hundreds of thousands of human beings lost their lives." And while Marxists like Burgis are [blamed](#) for ideological groupthink in academia, he follows Marx in challenging capitalist economics with counterargument rather than dismissal.

Friedman's "Suck. On. This." promptly became one of the most infamous examples of his own phraseology doing the sucking. In 2009, *The Spectator*'s Alex Massie [observed](#) that laughing at "the sheer gawd-help-us ghastliness found on the Gray Lady's op-ed page" via Friedman was uniting the blogosphere, sharing a takedown from liberal muck-raker Matt Taibbi at the alt-weekly *New York Press* [linked](#) by Reason libertarian Matt Welch, who in turn got it from *The Atlantic*'s conservative Andrew Sullivan.

Such post-Bush unity didn't eventually last in those publications, let alone push more editorial oversight onto Friedman. But his [assertion](#) that "the hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist — McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15" can serve to perfectly crystallize a contrasting vision of the sort of market that results when neither burgers nor bombers receive handouts.

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